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Cover, title page and spots:

designed by I. K. ANDERSON



**THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL**  
**Volume 18 - Number 4**      **Summer 1968**  
**Chapbook Number 10**

## INTRODUCTION

As far as we're concerned, it is the function of a little poetry magazine to print good poetry and to discover new poets. In our daily mail we look exclusively for good poems. When it comes time to pick an issue and we face the hard, lovely choices, when other things are very nearly equal, we'll pick the poem by the unfamiliar name. So it has been over the eighteen years of our existence. Some of the once unfamiliar names are now familiar indeed to all who read poetry. About half the poets we print in any issue appear there for the first time.

If always we discover, why a special Discoveries Chapbook? This time we tried to broaden our net by trying to uncover new poets, rather than wait for them to submit to us. Aided by a generous matching grant from the Wisconsin Arts Foundation and Council, under the 5H Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, we wrote to 40 poets who, in a sense, were our own past Discoveries—at least we published poems of theirs before they had achieved reputation. We asked them to recommend to us upcoming poets who in their judgment were worthy of greater recognition than they had yet received.

The response was splendid. We received poems from 91 poets. Selection of the contents of the present issue was the usual arduous, exhilarating process of our Editorial Board: private reading and comment, reading aloud of all poems that generated enthusiasm from

more than one board member, group discussion and finally, the decisions.

Here again, are our Discoveries, the best poems and poets available to us through nomination by poets whom once we befriended. We wish to thank them all heartily, and we wish especially to thank the the Wisconsin Arts Foundation and Council for its timely and generous support of this project. We must of course leave it to the judgment of our readers whether this issue is more exciting than our usual issues. We can only say that here are poets and poems we doubtless would not otherwise have seen.

A word of the future. In our Winter 1968-1969 issue, we hope to present another kind of Discovery—a selection of poetry written in writing workshops in the Chicago ghetto. The materials are being gathered by Gwendolyn Brooks, James Shiflett, and Paul Pekin.

**The Editors**





TWO POEMS by K. S. A. Agodoa  
*nominated by Robley Wilson, Jr.*

### **The Hill**

it ought to be a hill he says looking  
around at the flat woodland i shrug  
he spreads the quilt over the leaves  
then sits on it smiling up at me  
i stand absurdly indecisive we  
came to this place hand in hand  
carrying a bottle of red wine as though  
it were a great treasure hand in hand  
to me like children thrilled by time  
away from grown ups hand in hand  
to him like lovers escaping the world  
now he wants to share the wine  
he holds out his hand i kneel  
beside him watching his face taste  
it he says i touch my lips to it  
it pleases me but i teeter on the edge  
of his mood fighting for my balance  
he offers me more yellowjackets  
hover around the bottle drawn  
to the sweetness they light  
on the rim of the bottle the way  
i wait on the perimeter of his mood  
they test and retest the sweetness  
and so do i one of the bees crawls  
too far into the bottle and buzzes and  
buzzes over the burgundy liquid  
i too edge closer and closer

to the center my head slightly buzzy  
with the wines effect then the buzzing  
stops i know the bee is drowning  
for i am too later we watch a row  
of spiders migrating over our quilt  
footprints as faint as those  
we stepped into the leaves no trace  
of a path left behind then it is late  
we gather up our picnic stuffing  
the bottle the cups and the afternoon  
into our paper sack the woods seem  
thicker as we drive out the road long  
and winding i feel as though  
i am falling in slow motion from a high  
a very high place

## Massacre

one dozen kittens six to each purring  
tabby all related cousin brother  
sister one cat the mother of the other  
mother cat i proud godmother of the lot  
chose a bright morning to visit them  
in the hay loft where they romped  
anxious for their furry shapes i pulled  
open the red door no meow or tumbling  
calico form greeted me the silence  
crept toward me on padded paws stood  
so terribly close to my face that its  
whiskers brushed my cheeks i shivered  
lifted one foot over the threshold and  
stepped inside KITTIES? silence  
padded up behind me sat on its haunches  
i turned to it WHERE ARE THE KITTENS?  
it reached out a paw to me i jumped  
at the touch turned back to the hay  
two three four steps i saw the first  
one his lifeblood spattered on his  
white coat his body bent in diverse  
directions two three more steps on  
one by one i found each quiet shape  
i walked with silence away from the red  
hay back to the bright morning WHO  
i asked my father DID THIS? he said  
THEIR FATHER then he buried them for me  
**K. S. A. Agodoa**





TWO POEMS by Marylou Buckley  
*nominated by John L'Heureux*

### Questions of the Rose

Roses overblown as Floradora girls  
plumped with after theater suppers  
disport themselves disarmingly  
petals and pounds  
are only incidental  
when the roseness of the rose  
and the girlness of the girl  
are never seriously in question

Who asks a serious question of the rose  
might just as well try alchemy  
to summon summer  
roses in petticoated chorus blown  
down roads of June remembered  
prefigure autumn apples cold  
and a tree unleaved  
questions of the rose are incidental



Once there was  
a rose of girl  
Pomifera  
girl of rose  
her roseness sealed  
to fructify  
Floribunda  
flowering  
till crackle of thorn  
and a tree unleaved  
Rosamunda  
girl of all  
the cockeyed world  
who kissed the apple  
of God's eye  
in camel colored  
Galilee  
anyone knows  
apple is  
the fruit of rose

We have freighted her young bones  
with gold and ivory and stone  
weighting her girl child shoulders down  
made blue her eyes and gilt her tresses  
dolloed her up in brocade dresses  
who never wore but what she wove at home  
flashed her with diamonds straightened her nose  
sat her up stiff on a sky high throne  
who once ran free as the Psalmist's doe  
fifteen years old in Galilee  
laughing aloud in a latter day  
a girl in petal in a world in leaf

Rosa super rosida  
bloom then triumphant and reign

## Leviathan Emeritus

The dragon snores beside the sea road.  
His scales, tarnished and protesting when  
he grumbles forth to challenge shadows,  
are dull as old tin pie plates.

His snout  
is sore, no longer pink, but rough  
from wrath. He tucks his tired tail  
into the moist, the morning grass.  
It looks less cruel that way. He thinks.  
Besides, it chafes from ancient lashings.

Self-employed, he gets no pension,  
resents his being out of fashion  
to children who regard his antique  
evil curiously, with what calm eyes.

His heart is savage, unappeased.

Marylou Buckley



Two POEMS by Christopher Bursk  
*nominated by James Boyer May*



**Adjust, Adjust**

I was born committing suicide,  
holding my breath; they had to drag me kicking  
out of this damp garage, this airtight inside,  
the gases I struggled back to  
until the doctors slapped me alive  
and shouted: survive, survive.

After Hiroshima, turning four,  
I battered my head at the master bedroom door;  
every night I dreamt I was a child burning at that  
town dump  
at the world's edge, Japan;  
and every night my father yelled: be brave,  
behave, behave.

I ripped his set of Plato at eight,  
the year my mother was put away at Boston State,  
and war was fought in some darkness called Korea;  
all winter, I played dead in the corner  
while my teachers clapped:  
adapt, adapt.

Grandmother took me in till I was ten ;  
with her best silver carving knife I locked her with  
me  
in the den, all night, clinging to her bathrobe,  
demanding  
to cut our wrists in a lovers' pact ;  
her only promise I could secure  
was : endure, endure.

I threw tantrums into eleven ;  
I couldn't sleep ; McCarthy lashed out at reds in  
the nightmares  
where he held me witness ; they nailed grandmother  
up for heaven,  
that year ; I pounded my fingers bloody on the pews  
while the minister spit :  
submit, submit.

I counted my bones, waiting to be dead ;  
at thirteen, an invalid in this nursing home, my bed,  
I watched the homemakers of Arkansas rail at  
Negro girls  
between commercials, curse the first graders  
whom they tried to storm,  
shrieking : conform, conform.

At fifteen, in South Station where I ran away,  
every week, I bedded down on papers inksmudged  
with the blood  
of freedom fighters, left in heaps in Hungary to  
decay,  
while old men rubbed against my thighs,  
lulling me to them with the hum  
of : succumb, succumb.

I couldn't. Even with sleeping pills,  
razor blades, I couldn't. While the U.S. played  
chicken  
in the hills with atom bombs, I gave up my body  
like sixteen years  
of hardened clay to be molded slippery

under the touch of my girl's hand and thigh  
while she moaned all night: comply, comply.

Why couldn't I? When the world lapsed wide  
and elastic into too much, too bright space when  
Kennedy died  
and the roads wore bald; and the yards stretched  
between houses,  
and the towns gleamed like chrome, I drove into  
walls,  
day after day while the police barked:  
obey, obey.

Can't you bleed? Coward, can't you die  
while wrists are cut, throats slit, those children, all  
suicides,  
are gassed in Vietnam; at twentyfour can you only  
cry  
while men shoot themselves to death  
in the DMZ, and your analyst coughs; you must  
adjust, adjust.



### Keeping Garden at the Edge of the World

Despite Maud's headache we went to Salunga  
even though I was damned for calling Anna  
a fool. Anna couldn't spell; we ran like boys  
the whole road, Maud's Mennonite bonnet swinging  
like a slingshot at her hips. There, going pale,  
in the marketplace Maud folded into my arms  
like paper; brussel sprouts spilled out her basket  
across the marble steps where I cooled her off. She

had

still to shop for her five step-sisters; got up;  
the sun melted. I had to half shoulder her home,  
spelling long words to myself, all the way; that

night

I slept in her lavender. The next day I was shut out  
by her mother, cursing me out of her yard—Maud

died

of a cerebral hemorrhage; I cut off all my hair;  
I saw her sister Anna once in the hospital, hugging  
her body in tight like the layers of a cabbage.

Up with the roses, every morning,  
I break the hold of the sky on the vines,  
releasing roseleaves from the tentacles  
that tighten in mist around their stems,  
casting designs on the pink cheeks of flowers.

For years now, untangling sons from sleep  
where they lie knotted and trapped in their dreams,  
and rooting here yellow cheerfulness down  
where the shore rolls off  
like a corpse overboard into the sea,  
I have kept garden at the edge of the world.

I have learned edges, the brinks  
beyond which all babies breath, all angel's slippers,  
my sweet miscarrieds, my strays, my Maud,  
are undertowed in the salt of seavoids,  
the black space that flows beyond the present,  
this cliff where I plant and prune moss rose alive.

All night the skies hug the earth to death  
and let it drop in the sand.

I live by growing, transplanting blue spruce  
against the darkness that borders here,  
restoring wind-rusted pine, Princess Elizabeths,  
the dying Kennedy rose I snatch away  
with a mother's possessiveness, day after day,  
from the sea; I save all things, used, secondhand,  
old roots, church pillars, chopping blocks, winekegs,  
1917 seeds, skipping stones, forsythia shoots,  
schoolbells, railroad ties, my Rose, my Chester,  
Alonso, Louie, my Vaughn, old friends  
I collect and keep busy, stray cats, saplings,

lost children; nothing in my hands  
outgrows its use, rosepetals I catch in jars,  
pinewood I refinish, sunflower seeds and suet for  
birds,  
old diapers, stiff trojans from the beach to save  
pennies in,

leaves brittle as plastic, rich dirt, peat moss,  
dried grass ; all day, I rake my compost pile,  
add to it prized mulch, good manure.  
I am a mother. I will let nothing go.

Papa and Dr. Apple drank whiskey  
in the parlor while Mama knotted the cord  
and the midwife aired the rooms ;  
when I was born, Mama changed her name  
from Nora to Grace ;  
Papa lost the grocery store ;  
when Harold came, Gen got scarlet fever  
and cut off all my curls ;  
all day I hummed to myself  
and sold Grandpa back the flowers  
he grew behind the blacksmith's shop  
where he fit horses into his hands ;  
Mama sewed the finger I slit off  
back on ; when I was six and dying,  
Papa fed me teaspoons of brandy,  
and pulled out the swords ; he woke up  
a day later to find me sewing buttons  
on his shirts ; when I was twelve,  
Papa and I sneaked out behind the barn  
to raise carrots and smoke  
after Mama went back to teaching  
in the one room schoolhouse in Salunga  
where Ruth, then I, followed her ;  
Papa went bankrupt and did the algebra  
I was teaching ninth grade ; the day I married  
Gen swabbed my bellybutton out  
and Papa became a middle name ;  
for three weeks I cooked only bacon  
and nagged your father to swallow his spit  
and speak up ; after each son  
I started a nursery school  
and floored the first child that hit me ;  
he stuck to me like lint after that ;  
Papa drained out like a bottle of rye



with only the label left and died ;  
after three wireterriers, four cats,  
one Brownie pack, two Sunday schools,  
three Cub Scout dens, and four miscarriages,  
I conceived you ; at first I thought  
you were a tumor swelling your poison ;  
sore at my breasts, marked one,  
your cheeks bear my scratches, my bruises ;  
when I gave birth to you,  
I bore fire out of my gut ; at the end  
Mama had to empty out her bowels  
in a plastic pouch ; winter smothered saplings  
under its white pillows ; the Germans burnt Jews  
like old vines, used the bodies of children ;  
the wind slit my wrists and throat,  
and I brought you forth, that anger  
that ate at my belly, that knot tightening  
in my stomach, red and kicking, that cry  
I had to let out, that curse,  
that live hand-grenade, a son,  
and gave to you my father's name.

**Christopher Bursk**





TWO POEMS by Barry Cole

*nominated by Edward Lucie-Smith*

### Reported Missing

Can you give me a precise description?  
Said the policeman. Her lips, I told him,  
Were soft. Could you give me, he said, pencil  
Raised, a metaphor? Soft as an open mouth,  
I said. Were there any noticeable  
Peculiarities? he asked. Her hair hung  
Heavily, I said. Any particular  
Colour? he said. I told him I could recall  
Little but its distinctive scent. What do  
You mean, he asked, by distinctive? It had  
The smell of a woman's hair, I said. Where  
Were you? he asked. Closer than I am to  
Anyone at present, I said: level  
With her mouth, level with her eyes. Her eyes?  
He said, what about her eyes? There were two,  
I said, both black. It has been established,  
He said, that eyes cannot, outside common  
Usage, be black; are you implying that  
Violence was used? Only the gentle  
Hammer blow of her kisses, the scent  
Of her breath, the . . . Quite, said the policeman,  
Standing; but I regret we know of  
No one answering to such a description.

## Doors

We could hang fruit or meat upon the kitchen door  
If its heavy frame contained as heavy panels.

And in the bedroom could keep on hooks a woman  
Gowned for bed, a spare in case the first were  
painted.

On the children's door hang new dolls and spineless  
books,  
Bagatelle, wooden puzzles, the inadvertant child.

The front door concentrates our interest, the door  
We hang our friends upon when they outstay their  
time.

Finally there is the back door—a way out, means  
To a garden's end—its rusted handle thigh height.

**Barry Cole**



FIVE POEMS by Kevin Crossley-Holland  
*nominated by Edward Lucie-Smith*



**Epithalamium**

*for Stephen and Judy Kane*

The sun struck at you where you stood,  
still separate, and braced bright bands  
around you. It was momentary,  
but absolute; then you moved on,  
and in your train bridesmaid and page  
uncompromised.

All down the nave  
the congregation, topped and tailed,  
was mottled in the light stained glass  
had caught, and altered, and passed on;  
two phalanxes in motley, blotched  
and stained red, yellow, blue and green,  
sneaked glances at each other, sang  
together, watched the bride and groom.  
Watched and identified: for one  
a dream, and one a dream gone wrong,  
for one never to come, and one  
not even now a dream; and then,  
through you, a sense renewed of all  
that's possible, always being  
unfulfilled.

Deaf for that moment  
to the traffic outside, voices  
of a Saturday morning in June,  
we gazed at your coincidence,  
that where you stood, by some good chance  
light fell unstained and married you.

## The Gun Hills Revisited

BEWARE, it said, in red capitals,  
WHEN THE RED FLAG IS FLYING;  
but the salted wind had eaten away  
the reason, and there was no flagstaff now.  
I knew, I remembered it  
as soon as I saw that tilted board,  
standing on one leg, a dune-crest from the sea.  
I gave my wife three guesses:  
her first 'Beware of the tides';  
her second, 'Beware of the Shuck';  
her last, 'Beware of the Red Flag'.  
I told her then of how, a boy,  
sudden rabbits startling me, marram grass  
prickling,  
I hunted for spent cartridges,  
burnished crayons half-bedded in dunes.  
(What afternoons!) I hoarded them  
in my pockets, made holsters of my socks;  
and later I stacked them  
in my grandfather's spent cigar box.  
I remember the coils of barbed wire,  
the concrete emplacements I never questioned  
and no-one cared to explain.  
It is as if they had never been.  
There is only this board, ambiguous,  
that I must have seen before,  
emblem both of happiness and war.

The Shuck is a headless dog that prowls along the  
North Norfolk coast by night.

## The Ring

The cut cornelian is  
oval, giant and orange  
as the evening sun seems  
there, where all things,  
even shells and stones,  
sea-lavender, grow large  
in the place's emptiness —  
saltmarsh and barging sea,  
above all sky acres.  
Semi-precious, priceless,  
it glows in pale gold;  
edged, unforgiving diamonds  
stand on either side  
of it, shoulder-wardens.  
After the turn of the tide  
the sand's taut skin  
glitters with salt grains  
like dust of diamonds.  
Heads down, hurrying  
along that windswept strand  
between sea and sandcliff,  
we came upon it, waiting  
to be come upon by chance.  
It shone as if lit  
within; warmed to our blood;  
tasted, like tears, of brine.  
We took it then  
and keep it now.  
Heirloom in the making, made  
to our design, it signifies  
engagement: you to me,  
and we to that wild place.

## A Dream and a Death

He had died in his sleep. Who sleep had taken by surprise, not insidiously inching up from behind, but with the clean blow of an axe. It felled him like the sapling he was. He had been listening to the great wind outside wrenching at the roots, battering the rib-cage of the old elm. Listening and thinking: improbable, human tree, more likely to succumb to the onslaught of a bumble bee.

Relatives and friends had gathered round his bed, not at all surprised. He would have liked to know what they said who gazed so openly at him; but being dead, he did not know. Like shoals of aimless leaves they scraped about, not distraught yet not prepared to go, severing the link for ever. And there were many things he had wanted to say (or, more precisely, would have wanted to say), and could not now.

His eyes opened: the room was empty and shuddering, and the curtains beat like wings. He walked to the window and looked down from a great height. He saw it lying there, stunned and helpless, so astoundingly green, still breathing. People were already gathering around it out of curiosity; they stared at it and fingered it; the wind still moaned in it. He turned away, passionate and constricted, as if he was dreaming.

## Spring Tide, Burnham-Overy-Staithe

Sea undermines the sand-cliffs,  
unties marram knots.

Surges of dark water  
sweep sand into the creeks

patrolled by pirate skuas.  
Shrikes and kittiwakes

fly in with the flood,  
driven from their drift-nests

on Scolt Head. The groynes,  
channels, side-gullies

cannot contain this tide;  
white sea-stallions

race over the saltmarsh,  
thrift and thistle and mud.

Waves lap, and slap  
the base of Burnham dyke

that frowns, unforgetful  
of the great flood. Gorse

half-hides its scars — sandbags,  
cement blocks, giant spars.

Bitterns boom their warning  
now as the water rises.

Men shoal on the Staithe.

Kevin Crossley-Holland







THREE POEMS by Jane Galin  
*nominated by Galway Kinnell*

One

I heard a music in a dream,  
notes arose from the bottom of the sea  
like guilt from the floor of my soul.

the bare tips of trees are embedded in the sky  
and the sky is dead, choked on the bones of birds,  
time too has died  
upon the figurines of despair crowding the window  
sill.

deathmasks of time.

all night your arm heavy with your sleep was on me  
while I watched the darkness withdraw from the  
light,

and that dawn, inverted dusk was a lessening of  
my being,

while you demanded of yourself to me  
all of you, your skin, your hands.  
the high note of your breathing  
was the song of a falling doll.

the days are dropping off my life  
like the first casual leaves, where they may.  
I have thrown the great guilt into the sea like a  
screaming cat  
and seen the mouths of the sea retreat,  
but the slow bass note of pain surfaces.

## Two

semblances of the other life  
ignite to taste,  
dont you take bags of its bark to have?  
—wild sachet.  
my eyes scanned the old skies,  
clearly I could see the righted trapezoids of old  
mountains,  
they were there as I used to see them  
not expressionistic and wrong-angled.

I see the stranger walking  
making the bushes juxatpose,  
the huge firs behind stir predatory  
like anemone in air.  
the small-shouldered stranger aroused me  
but, we agreed, his eyes gave nothing,  
they were like bad grapes.

the birds make militant arcs,  
fleets move along the water—  
worms of light that trench the water wall.  
what is this chill?  
irretrievable—I let the bad eyes stink in his face,  
not curing them to fragrant raisins, two old lives.  
the irretrievable, wave over wave.

I want not to but I understand.  
birds diagram the space, they are a skywriting;  
wind reads the newspaper—  
mind without body, body without mind.  
and will I see the gulf? stratified womb of rock,  
eyes open in a nevada,  
in the deserts of slate and image came  
of old skies, semblances of the other life.

### Three

I loved you so well I asked you  
to tell me things I didnt know

but that is over  
there are two shadows on the wall  
one is blue and one is pink

in my mind the wash of sea and black sand  
on the terrace tables of octagonal slate  
blue wicker chairs and white wicker chairs

my sister was tiny when she believed  
God was the little beard inside a peanut

it was not no light that made the figures dark  
but a generation separated by a year

she moved like a raw egg through the air  
a woman watched and wanted her  
a boy held a cigar

it all reminded me of something else  
the music broke like the cracked voice of Beethoven

my fingers smell of onions  
once I was in love, he had  
one blue eye and one brown eye

the gods took pity and sent a youth of  
extraordinary beauty  
his hair curling over his ears like little leaves and  
crystal eyes

I was speechless when the heat of his hands burnt  
up the past  
and the black ash scattering laced the bare  
branches

as the earth moves around the sun and passes  
close to the sun  
the sublimity gaseous and angora flew off  
into the space there poured—joyous music  
and mercury straining his arc  
I am among the spheres remembering similar  
things

**Jane Galin**





A POEM by Laurence Goldstein  
*nominated by Charles Philbrick*

### Maytime

I stopped where love-in-idleness covered the hill.

"Not here," she said. "Not in the flowers."

All around wild pansies mimicked the clouds,

But near the ridge where the sun beats hard

Dry grass tumbled in clumps.

"Why not here," I asked. "Feel how soft. . ."

She plucked a violet blossom:

"I won't I will I won't I will I won't."

Motionless, then swaying faintly with the breeze,

Her trifling smile aimed nowhere, she said, "You

lose."

Breathing hard under the blanket's weight

I followed her slow steps over the field.

**Laurence Goldstein**



TWO POEMS by Edmund Helminski

*nominated by Judson Jerome*

### **The Photograph**

taken of a dead soldier)  
the image is blurred  
but see how

death has frayed the cloth  
how the flesh has come to rest  
as delicately as a towel

imagine how unfrightened  
the insects are  
at his open side

imagine that they are  
busy and casual trucks

the thing could be of interest  
a lens and shutter have  
saved it for us

more quickly than the bullet  
that selected him

more quickly than he could  
select a thought to die with

(now set in a frame  
not gold  
not even black  
set in nothing

but the things around you

## A Formula

An equation is that  
this equals that,  
a logical necessity,  
a way for you to see  
how it is at my end  
and vice versa, an understanding.

A formula is a way for you  
to find out just what is at my end,  
given the information you have.

A formula might have helped.

**Edmund Helminski**





### **Incident**

But I was fresh down  
From a jaguar camp  
High in the Maya Mountains

But she was smiling  
Over the board fence  
Outside her house  
Saying, sheeiit!

But her mother eyeing me  
Did I want sex  
Renting me the house  
For fifty cents

So I came back that night  
—crept under an open window  
“. . . out so some white man  
Can fuck MY daughter  
In MY bed!”

But I came back later again  
Peeking through the fence  
At the twinkle of his knifeblade  
In the darkness



### Susitna, River Of Us All

I would like to tell you about the salmon  
in the Susitna River  
I would like to tell you about them  
but how can I begin?  
Everything swirls in a heavy fog  
We cannot see the river or the fish  
from this gravel bar

But let me try again,  
Mix a quantity of grey paint  
Now smear it over this page  
And then, over your face  
The poem you will see, has no beginning  
As your face, it has no end

Now mix the color of a flaming mirror  
or a mirror smeared with blood  
This is the color of the salmon  
which we cannot see  
Hide this color behind your eyes  
where the seagulls can't reach it

Now back to the poem  
and the gravel bar  
Listen to the salmon rolling to the surface  
out there somewhere, in the fog

If you have used a watercolor  
note how unevenly it is drying  
in the darker, wetter parts  
feel deep inside  
the color of young seagulls  
coming up from Turnagain Arm

If you have used oil paint  
perhaps there are flecks of white  
These are the older birds  
drifting through grey mist  
over the Susitna River

### **Polite Version**

I have made a pipe  
from the wingbone  
of a seagull  
because I was there  
when he died  
Looking  
the other way . . .

While it was new  
I could put it  
to my ear  
and hear it  
moan and suck and splinter

I had it with me  
in Alaska  
Christmas of sixty-four  
and I remember  
on the Tok Cutoff  
waiting for a ride  
The cold was of a nature  
that laced its fingers  
through your guts  
and snapped you by the spine

The lady and her son  
with the U-Haul trailer  
Afraid of me  
yet more afraid  
of the long journey  
and the long night

The dust devils of pure snow  
Towering in the headlight glare  
The quietness; the snowlight

So they stopped  
and I wedged myself  
between a plywood box  
and the trailer fender  
Saying they were sorry  
there wasn't room  
in the car  
I kicked my feet  
to stay alive  
and when I stopped  
I was left  
listening to myself



**Vietnam  
Children Baseball  
In Golden Gate Park**

These are my thoughts  
as I watch the children  
playing in the park  
These are my thoughts  
as I watch them there  
throwing the ball  
back and forth  
back and forth  
Why do they all wear numbers ?

These are my thoughts  
as I watch the children  
playing in the park  
But are they playing?  
Back and forth  
back and forth  
each time they throw the ball  
precision precision  
precision precision

Back and forth  
back and forth  
with numbers on their shirts  
They are sharpening their reflexes  
They are sharpening the knife  
they must use  
back and forth  
back and forth

But doesn't the knife  
know the grindstone?  
But doesn't the grindstone  
know the whetted steel?  
The French have a name  
for a very thin-bladed knife  
they used to kill down knights with  
It had a very thin blade that would  
slide through  
  the visor of a helmet  
They called it  
  the Mercy of God

## The Guacamilla Bridge

On the night John told me  
he would have Winston kill me  
I ran fifteen miles  
to the Guacamilla bridge  
Wading out to a small island  
I watched from the reeds  
as the hunting truck eased  
down the steep hillside  
Winston walked in front  
tracking me by the headlights  
finding the bridge his flashlight  
flickered up and down the shoreline  
as I lay very very still

I am lying in bed  
sick to my stomach with worms  
and as I lie waiting  
I turn again and again  
toward the open window

With dusk the vultures have come  
sloping in, clumsy and grotesque  
to the large eucalyptus tree  
standing by the river  
Here, in the middle of town  
they are safe from snakes  
winding through the branches  
by moonlight  
I wonder if sometimes, at night  
one is restless on his branch  
opening his eyes to the lightning  
flickering through the clouds  
or sees the fish, far below  
drifting over the stones  
I do not think they can see me here  
on this bed  
but perhaps I am wrong

In my room,  
In the center of the ceiling  
a grey lightbulb is hanging  
from a white porcelain socket  
It does not work by the switch  
but when  
you touch it with your finger  
It flashes blindingly  
Black and white black and white  
Back again, darkness

I am waiting for sleep  
and as I wait  
a thought flies  
darkening over my brain  
again and again I refuse it  
but sometimes, far away  
I can feel a "something"  
turn me this way and that  
before it is gone  
What is this feeling?  
What is this something?  
Where does it come from?  
Where does it go?

Two days before John told me  
Winston would kill me, he caught  
a boa constrictor  
which he placed in a wire cage  
Its eyes were impossible  
immobile dark flame  
staring steady in your eye  
It would fill itself with air  
and begin to hiss, that same night  
it smashed a hole through the cage  
and escaped



## Uwekahuna

We climbed a long way  
To cut this length of bamboo  
I hold now in my hand

Up the steep slope called Uwekahuna  
"The Wall of the Wailing Priest"

I have spent this afternoon  
Drilling holes to make a bamboo flute  
And now I play them  
For you, one by one

The first note is broken peach crystal  
The second, moss in melting snow  
The next is my tongue between your teeth  
The fourth . . . and the fifth

But let me play for you  
This tune I have learned

It will climb up through the blossoms  
Tangled vines of the paleva  
Perfuming the steep slope called Uwekahuna  
"The Wall of the Wailing Priest"

Sven Hulbert





TWO POEMS by Ellen Kirvin

*nominated by Judson Jerome*

### Stella in Love with My Plant

Stella's in love with my plant,  
she's drawn to it, twittering that long,  
limber neck of hers at its tremble of leaves.  
Light jinxed in jungles, falling aslant  
into fronds, came indoors on the dusk  
of these leaves. Their darker mass undecives  
all her stealth, and the unloosened thong  
we call instinct quivers. Not so brusque

as a pointer, she's wily,  
gauging her quarry. Slow tail alludes  
to the cunning a tiger springs on its feast.  
Her eager mind tries to be tensile, she  
thinks on the move. But apartments leave  
so little for the nature of the beast.  
Casually my footstep intrudes  
on ambushes she will not achieve

now. She sees leaves make her lair  
in this petrified forest. Earth warms,  
more congenial than cat litter. Guess who  
is caught squat on the pot's edge, derriere  
out? Who cannot stop peeing, that gazelle  
of a leak escaping her crouch? I love you  
(huge through the leaves, eyes flower alarm),  
you and my own permissiveness, Stell!

## Not Snowbound

Were you amazed too, watching ourselves stretch  
together and lean to the windowsill, how  
gymnastic bodies are? How muscles fletch  
exquisitely to oblige our balance and allow

our closeness not to swerve? There were our arms  
and legs singing out their long trajectories  
at twice four tangents, while we kissed in swarms.  
And, finally, making a calisthenic, siamese

effort to pull up the shade and see if  
too much snow had fallen for you to leave,  
we saw our petalled hybrid. Cornstalks stiff  
with frostbite slant sapless and disjointed, and  
unsheave

such gauntness—but we moved like the plant world  
learning pleasure, and mutually then  
merged with the kingdom of the animals.

Squirrelled

away at first, all blooded longing lures the origin  
of choosing. You, my most unquestioned choice,  
triggered even my cold toes to nuzzle in  
fun the same way babies let ideas rejoice  
on singsong vocal cords. In good time, your  
suzerain

warmth would thaw my shivering, loving feet.  
But our entreated blizzard failed: you'd go.  
Our limbed impressions on the chilly sheet  
lasted, like "angels" kids make flat on their backs  
in snow.

Ellen Kirvin



THREE POEMS by Sharon Loughheed  
*nominated by Carroll Arnett*



**Scheduled Event**

It is 5 a.m. /  
          they arrive  
through the skylight  
          partaking  
of a similar light /  
          transparent  
diffuse /  
          colloidal  
yet discrete like  
          jelly-fish.

I rise from the  
          bottom  
of the pool.  
          Eager  
to be friends, I  
          exclaim,  
“GLUB GLUB,”  
          wave my  
tentacles  
          at them.

All ten, twenty-six  
of them  
do not reply. All  
the faces  
are mine: dog-fish,  
cat-fish  
angel-fish, sharks,  
whales,  
porpoises, salt-sea  
salmon.

All the mouths are  
working  
in rhythm: they keen  
like wolves.  
Silently. Close-open  
close-  
open: hungry  
hungry  
what to do?

I feed them papers  
my students'  
papers. "ESSAY FOR YOU.  
BLUE BOOK  
FOR YOU. TERM  
PAPER FOR YOU  
AND WATCH THE STAPLES."

They like the food.  
It is  
gratifying thus to see  
them eat.

I run out of prose /  
give them  
poems. They quiver  
and whimper  
with delight. Silently.  
Emboldened

I offer poems with  
my teeth.

I lick their  
tongues  
tickle their gills.

We are friends: it  
is warming  
truly warming /  
a fire  
begins in each gut /  
the papers  
are burning / fire  
shines  
from every gut.

Oh warm! we dance  
in the light /  
the water boils /  
fire  
and warm /  
we dance  
friends  
we dance

#### SONG: SOLO

Oh the merry conflagration!  
See the pretty papers burn.  
Hark! the swift assimilation!  
when is it to be my turn?

#### CHORUS: EN MASSE

Oh the very best fire  
is a poem fire  
a poem fire  
a poem fire  
Oh the very best fire  
is a poem fire  
Oh when  
do we feed  
the poet?

They rise to the skylight  
I too wish to rise.  
TAKE ME TOO. HERE FOR YOU  
TOES & TENTACLES; EARS & EYES.  
They turn into night.  
BURN ME IN FLIGHT!

But not yet dead  
I have  
nothing to give  
them nothing  
to give.  
I turn  
into drowning /  
the water  
is cool, and  
Ah, the first light  
bends  
in the black  
pool.



## Granite Creek

It's the quiet  
I like: the quiet  
of Granite Creek  
nobody roughing  
it up for gold /  
the gold town dead  
& the people: a  
black-robed nun  
walks the trackless  
main drag; her  
arms are full  
of black-eyed susans.

I stand on the sill  
of a jack-pine cabin /  
nails on the door  
from the torn-down  
billboards. The roof  
gone, sun shines  
thru the ceiling-  
beams / sun on the  
roses wch grow  
on the floor: wild  
roses cover the floor.

*It's the rotting wood  
they like, she sd, the  
rot makes them grow*



& they do grow & smell  
& revel in the rot & I  
in them. And I  
who can speak no words  
in this lush land  
where only phantoms  
admit of the rot, wd  
say quiet words  
to the roses, the wild  
growing roses  
in the roofless house.

### **The Recognition**

I collect you  
    in small ways:  
flowers.

Sometimes I lose one;  
    find it again.

You are more  
    than I can hold  
at one time.

**Sharon Lougheed**



A POEM by David Mus

*nominated by Galway Kinnell*

### Nightingale, after Keats

August. Winter evening. I walk in.  
To have left such sky, winter of it,  
The sky. Inside, the eye reminisces.

Here's the match-stick. I call it: crocus.  
Swelling alight, new breed, forced, kindling,  
Word shattering visible. And ancient.

The hearth lights the room, I remember.  
What to name what I heard. Is it the  
Invisible impossible bird?  
I reason backwards. Come so far, death  
Inbreeding, new violence appearing,  
Peremptory beauties and throughout  
Such waking as an earlier man's  
Dismay got at only deep in dream.  
Though an artist in his reasoning way.

The cuckoo strains into the thick air,  
The stupe. Dropping bald saccharine grains  
Into the slow evening. Rolling his  
Blindly saccharine pearl, again and  
Again into the wash of evening,  
Naming himself away. Something like:  
The commonest sister's hand beading.  
The oarsman forcing his stroke upstream.  
The man trying for sleep and can't get it.

What to name what I hear. What stirring,  
Dark wobble in the foliage,  
Won't leave me and night alone. What if:  
"You're always trying to make an ending,  
As if dreading the putting out of mind  
Much less than body's failing now, full pain,  
Collapse of loosened beams, the choking dust,  
Death the high calling you didn't follow,  
Taking all pain short of that, counterstress  
Made of me in such architecture, thus."  
I won't sell for a song a hard-won  
Lucidity. "You could make sense, it's done."  
Behind the weave of craft, to whistle  
In the dark. "Take it up with the highest  
Ranges of speech, Alps of the vaulted word,  
Iciest oracles, the final forms,  
Nameless sounding shapes, Mt. Blanc,  
Matterhorn."

I go back. For not knowing I have  
Quested the bird in April when all  
The modern months were husked from mind.  
Sun-motes Salome and the sun falls,  
In the screen of brown thrush, browner wren,  
Lark, tiny cross of vehemence,  
Under the mud the toad keeping time,  
Cuckoo, Embden geese or Gay's tractor  
Stinking up the valley, there is, or  
Was the dark warble, the extra voice.

Then in, in with a cry the bird  
Lifted to high hope's ceiling sang and  
Stuck, stood in starless skies whose night  
Dashed questions to my window, in,  
I'm into him and imagining  
It, the night plumage beating in  
My face and eyes, heart in mine  
And the throat throb and thrush winged  
Lift into empty sky up the night  
Of night's vein, rift in its ore,

Over in one song heart without halt  
Hell channel, dark continent and  
Now the highest serpentine Alps,  
The most frozen marbling Alps crossed  
In night night yielding a burst of  
Carnival, the sun, the warmth the  
Glee, Italian end, dawn's Rome, the sun.

Cyclamens strung and coiled pinking  
Viterbo's plowed outskirts that last  
October morning. Here was my own  
Precise calling in sight. And to have  
Plucked it clear, sober from its sad  
Aristotelean scene, fig and grape  
Straining toward silent hand, docile  
Wicker, sodden staves, ancient streaming tun.

Here. And months after. The name sticks.  
The sky, cyclamen, opens. I've  
Used up night, working it out, again:  
"Have I ever heard the nightingale?"  
From such terms, how know or cease. What  
Do I stand for, what ignominies.  
The windy hollow where the music  
Fled proves what song caught better ears one  
Dying spring. Made me Charles Brown  
Say it to see what in the word sky  
Stands. The month turns, without peace or  
Ending is gone. In June the cuckoo  
Hushes for summer, the singers are  
Cut down to me, change to this, song to this one.  
David Mus





THREE POEMS by Stuart Peterfreund  
*nominated by X. J. Kennedy*

**Lonely Whistle**

Lonely whistle  
The sound that comes  
Through tumbleweed  
And the sound through  
One cedar bough  
Or a forest of cedar  
It is the sound  
Of the last train  
To the final  
Station on the  
Line  
Lonely whistle  
Is what I do  
Tonight.

We have someone else's  
Winter here tonight  
Lonely whistle  
The wind comes to  
Something soft and  
Cleaves while between  
The two new winds  
Something vibrates  
In the dark  
In itself for  
An instant  
While birds turn  
From dry husks  
And they listen.

## Leonard Dies

There is no drug  
For refrigerators.  
Old Leonard  
(Ne Kelvinator)  
Chatters and moans  
Through a night haunted  
By melted Fudgesicles  
And the Bird's Eye kids.  
The cat, who used to  
Sleep purring on the top,  
Now sleeps with me and  
Risks unknown disease to  
Avoid the sick-room smell.  
The dump is not the answer,  
And I'm not a Christian Scientist;  
But repairmen never stop here  
Anymore.

Among the blackening milk cartons  
And beatified cows in maggoty  
Butcher paper, there is yet  
One unspoiled item. It is a jar  
Of New Orleans hot  
Mustard. The jar growls  
From behind a bottle of flat  
Club soda. On a good, spicy salami  
Sandwich, that mustard will burn  
Anybody's tongue.  
Old Leonard has a mute's joy  
Of poetry in his last,  
Iceless days.

## Skin Poem

I started with a thing  
About cuticles, picked them  
Got them into all the poems  
In some way, tried other skin  
(Lower lips work well in the sonnet.  
Foot callouses work well in villanelles.)  
But what must stop  
Must stop, when one cannot  
Grow the next crop.  
It is a nakedness like other  
Nakedness.  
I am reminded of the  
Green-eyed mythic poet Henry  
And his legendary pelt,  
Which hangs in all our studies;  
Bushy, golden, right-wing,  
And totally useless.  
I'm back at the pelican game  
Again ma. Listen to me tear.

Stuart Peterfreund



THREE POEMS by Dennis Saleh  
*nominated by James Boyer May*



**Frankenstein's Journal**

As if they had wills—  
five wills of their own,  
the fingers refuse to move.  
How can I go further?

Tonight four new hands were brought to me.  
They look good. I am particularly happy  
with the pink still in the nails.  
I have determined an answer to the fingers.

\*\*\*

The castle presents its problems.  
The damp.  
There is nothing to be done with the  
porcelain; the stains will not come out.

\*\*\*

January seventeenth.  
Is it not appropriate? That  
the eyes arrive this week?

\*\*\*



*. . . but the power of regeneration  
is still possessed to a great degree,  
though diminished because  
of the greater specialization  
of cells in the earthworm's body.*

*If an earthworm is cut in two  
between segments 15 and 18,  
the head piece will regenerate  
a new tail and the tail piece,  
a new head.*

\*\*\*

Last night I dreamed  
of the great black bird  
tattooed on its chest.  
Its two parts fluttered apart  
and I could see myself  
sewing the bird together.  
It is curious that I should  
dream of the tattoo only.

\*\*\*

The creature quite . . .  
Pleases me?  
I would have liked it  
to have had more hair.  
A larger nose.

\*\*\*

Dawn clears across the face of the body.  
What does not clear  
is this return to the old problems,  
this slow spill of wax worked to work at light,  
the candle's nightmare at the dawn.  
Is it a worm story then, my work?  
And at this end, worm, what are we?

\*\*\*

April: Electricity!

\*\*\*

One could smell the sea close at hand tonight.  
What great clouds of dead fish  
there might have been overhead.  
I wonder if my work is not finally  
some great marine venture.  
What would the early ocean say to me tonight?  
Would it mark the pretense of so many cells?  
That I should tease their quick?

\*\*\*

Frankenstein, Frankenstein . . .

\*\*\*

God that it is an *it!*

\*\*\*

I am so afraid—  
now that I may be right.  
There's something in the body.

### **The Block Poet**

All day long they wait,  
standing beneath my window,  
hushed and waiting to catch  
some faint, tentative clicking  
that might be the typewriter,  
me, clicking an odd phrase  
or clutch of words:  
I am the Block Poet.

And if I say no one  
understands me, this is  
to say, of course, everyone  
understands me. They have a faith.

One that brings me up the  
mail says "Maybe tomorrow  
you'll hear." At five the  
crowd swells with carpenters

and Hastrup the Butcher,  
who brings some fancy cut  
he fancies a poet's meat.  
It's mad, this waiting.

Sitting here I write these  
words, paste them to the window,  
*Go home. These words are going,  
disappearing, disappearing . . .*

## Like Ducklings

She gives off her children  
like ripples, a pebble dropped  
down this sidewalk with  
rings and rings scattering—out  
and past her, four small white  
turbulences—calm as blonde.

Then she is Mother Duck:  
She is swollen with herself  
in her children: they follow her  
and know she is right.  
Family-sized, they  
go past me without a quack.

Her husband, Is he home?  
Does he lie abed, exhausted,  
Thinking his quite impossible  
trail of seed, trailing off  
behind her? Father Feather,  
children stir in you like summer grass.

**Dennis Saleh**





TWO POEMS by Ellin Sarot  
*nominated by Judson Jerome*

### **Your Face My Face**

Your face is more beautiful  
than any other face  
I have ever loved.  
Your eyes shielded by glasses  
mirror me to myself  
and coming from you  
the image is almost beautiful  
almost true.  
I never look in mirrors  
knowing there is fear,  
but coming from you  
I almost care.  
I put on my glasses too.  
I catch you closer gentler  
on clearer view,  
and then my eyes  
hold me holding you.

## Midnight

*(for my parents)*

Well-spent and hanging  
by a thread, All's well.  
The bell-pull shudders down the peal:  
All's well. The threadbare  
watchman nods his watch:  
What of the night?

'Empty now, the birds  
took flight against the dark.  
All's well, Goodnight.'

Old blurry sight!  
What birds were they?  
Doves and pigeons fly alike—O dark,  
like vultures, carrion  
precursor breed.

The tightropes pluck  
the life long lines:  
the grave's near-  
miss taut licked in skin,  
this fair flesh; blue-vined,  
pulse plunders on  
in spite of kin and kiss.  
Come, kiss me, let's forget  
lest we remember and beget. Too late:  
scarred down the road of wrist  
mere we here are the evidence.

'The birds  
took flight. All's well,  
it soon will start  
again Goodnight.'

Ellin Sarot



THREE POEMS by Marilee Sorotskin  
*nominated by James Schevill*



**A Poem**

How can I  
Describe  
The texture of the color

At the center of flame?

I can only  
Let you

inside —

## Imprints

My father doesn't read books.  
He smells them. The only things he  
really reads are upsidedown,  
backward—thin strips of type:  
leaded-out, locked words.

Of  
frontward print, he likes only  
clean shapes of white and  
even blacks. Shoving his glasses up,  
shutting his eyes, he smells  
pages first, then binding, and  
if the scent's right,  
opens his eyes,  
and holding a leaf sideways to light, looks  
at it, then through: if the black  
is all black, and all the lines  
are lined up back to back, the paper  
handmade, watermark good, he rubs a page  
gently—against his cheek.

One night,  
he brought home an old, Dutch book with  
water-warped cover and stuck wavy pages.  
After he'd carefully pried  
all the pages apart,  
slowly moving the cover open  
and closed, open and closed, he  
smelled it.

First all he got was  
must. Then salt. Then  
the vinegar of ink on sweet,  
sweet paper . . .



*Within the time-darkened glowing  
the stubborn master of mirrors,  
polisher of gems, moves—  
forces once again the unicorn, and where  
the mystery of grapes had once amber run,  
sudden black letter follows black letter  
in ancient monkish procession:*

*In torch-lit cloisters,  
slow, brown-robed scribes bow  
again to patient ritual, trace again  
sacred symbols of the sacred,  
silent tongues:*

*Low against an evening sky,  
flights of cranes blaze shapes,  
and the young god,  
watching,  
thinks a gift  
Promethean bright:*

*In drifts from strange,  
distant  
winds,  
—Wings*

Touch the cheek he holds the open book against.



## The Passengers

Vanishing . . .

To trap each other with our bodies,  
fold-down trays and coffee cups, we'd  
strapped ourselves in place, obedient, flying  
blankness. Nothing  
outside pressed against our small windows,  
and for the long, still timelessness  
we didn't move; then, someplace  
nowhere, the white pushed back, and  
against its billowing, we saw  
ourselves

—a small gray speeding shadow, caught  
exactly at the center of its speeding  
Rainbow Bullseye.

No delicate translucent wings—not  
even these—

to beat and beat, and beating,  
break against the fastness  
of those iron rings of air:

we see ourselves

stiff, mute,  
tamed by each other's stillness; Nails  
rake wax skins of empty paper cups  
as, impaled upon that sightless, spectral eye

we watch

our,

. . . final vanishing.

**Marilee Sorotskin**





SIX POEMS by David Steingass  
*nominated by X. J. Kennedy*

**THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCATION**

**Mendocino, Northern California**

Mendocino was settled largely by  
people from the State of Maine, in  
which Katahdin is the highest peak.

The houses have high shins  
In Mendocino; the graves  
Are full of Mainiacs, and marble  
Letters are everything left  
Of the towns they traveled from.

But the church, still open Sundays,  
We caught in a dozen attitudes,  
And a gingerbread house behind  
A still pond, doubled itself perfectly.

From the tidal bridge, half  
A mile away, we shot some more.  
Too far away, we said, too much  
Morning fog: still, we might never return.

What came back, perfect as a tintype,  
Could have been a winter scene  
In the mountains off Katahdin.

### **Finding My Way: Northern Ohio**

On Christmas day, driving to my father's  
Homestead, York and Lester buried  
Charters, and gave up their city  
Limits to the abominable  
Snow, that climbed over eaves  
And terrorized from rooftops.

When I scraped snow from mailboxes,  
Names that made mine look like Smith  
Stretched for extra syllables.

This was land where, years before,  
He had given horses back their harness  
When they could smell the barn.

A pool table in the basement now,  
A spot near the tracks  
Where bums still sleep, an old  
Cast iron hand pump at the sink,  
And what strange-faced man at the door.

### **A Turquoise Ring in the Midwest**

I stood on this cobbled drive  
Until I was sixteen,  
Each day yielding right of way  
To blacksnakes and barnrats  
But never to myself;  
Who lost an Indian turquoise  
Ring once, too large for my finger,  
Too rich, I thought, for the land.  
Today I return.  
Even the barn has gone.  
Small hope for the ring  
I have looked for each day.

## The Slaughter-Room Picture

Every two hours they broke  
Because the big houses did, fearing  
Blood fixation, and once  
The mother took a picture.

"Would it help to smile," she wondered,  
And caught the proud half-leers  
Of husband and son,  
Alike in arctics and denim, brown rubber  
Aprons spotted with feathers and blood,  
Hands puffed and pink as babies'.

The father's hooded picker behind,  
Where turkeys flew from their feathers  
On a drum of hollow, rubber fingers.  
Cooling vats glazed with ice,  
The stainless-steel eviscerating table,  
The tendon puller on the wall.

Loose in the son's hand, a pencil-  
Thin killing-knife. Blood and cold  
Have deadened his hand. The killing  
Funnels beside him on the wall;  
The empty scalding cage open  
Over threads of steaming water.

He dreams of slaughter: rhythm  
Packs the room like steam from the scalding.  
Groping for a turkey upside down,  
Its grape-full wattles pale after the jugular  
Slash, blood spurting up his arm.  
The snap of his wrist pops the neck:  
A tumult in the funnel  
Exactly as if the turkey were running.  
On and on, soaked in blood, a smooth machine.

Then the break again, and the son  
Wakes in the dark, groping  
With his left hand, his right  
Clenched thin as a pencil.

## At The Custer Battlefield

Reno has been forgiven  
Survival, given back full Brigadier,  
And drummed into ground at the place  
He remembered as a mistake.  
The pall bearers strain in the photograph,  
As though the box were full  
Of all the men who died here.  
I imagine the foul air he left  
Snapping his bones to Full Dress  
For purification.

Dewey Beard, the last Sioux, went in 1955.  
He was eighteen the day of the battle,  
And may have cut his first scalp  
Or counted coup, or been wounded.  
At ninety-seven, he was the oldest  
Living boy: "They were all good fighters,"  
He said, "The day was very bright."  
They picked his head for years.

The dead are marked with smooth limestone  
Slabs, according to mounds of brass  
Caseings. They crouch in small groups  
Along the ridges in hand-scraped trenches,  
And up the river slope to the final  
Knoll, their heads just visible  
Above the waving buffalo grass.  
From a distance they look like a mound  
Of flour at the impact of a flat  
Rock. Their one chance is to gather  
Like a cloud in a vast red sky,  
Or like a mirror on a bright day.

## Grant's Pass, Oregon

At six in the morning, the diner-man  
In the only place we found open,  
Stirred his stories into our coffee.  
His father rode shotgun  
On the Sacramento-Los Angeles stage line.  
The Coffeyville, Missouri, stagehouse  
Massacre, was his mother's first memory.  
She claimed a James boy smiled at her.

Driving North to moon craters,  
The land was tawny as a bear.  
Rain steamed from the hills;  
We lost our eyes down gorges  
And went through forests with headlights on,  
Watching the edges of trees,  
Afraid to stop.

The man's parents died two years ago,  
Together. He was sad that none  
Of their stories had been preserved.

David Steingass





TWO POEMS by Peter Wild

*nominated by James Boyer May*



### **Kite Man**

We first met our next-door neighbor  
    rounding the corner of his house  
        with a kite;  
he smiled and nodded,  
    blurted his name,  
but it trailed off in the  
    wind as he ran. . . .

beyond that we've never met him,  
    but have become used  
to his flashing by the windows  
    with his kite,  
his feet thumping across the wet lawns  
    at night;

he appears an amiable man, sweated,  
    and standing far off in the fields  
        watching his kite  
soar and sip in the spring winds;  
and once by chance  
    I saw it hanging  
magnified against the eye of the moon . . . .

occasionally we see his family  
    staring from the window,  
his children sunken-eyed,  
    and his wife's fingers white  
        upon the sill;  
    I've called to him,  
but he only nods and smiles,  
    floundering through drifts, tugging  
        the icy kite,  
looking back over his shoulder as he runs,  
    lips and fingers turning blue. . . .

### Hogan-sleeper's snow-watcher song

Overhead the timbers rot and creak ;  
werewolves circle the eaves,  
    dancing and spitting between  
  their split toes ;  
the lambs snuggle and drool  
  in my armpits,  
dreaming wool babies  
    ladle honey down their throats. . .  
I fumble the chambers  
  of my monstrous pistol  
and keep its barrel toward the door. . .  
ah, that big man with hairy  
    arms keeps smashing wooden lanterns,  
and spoons the stars  
  like crushed ice  
into the brittle, hollowed-out  
    orange of my skull.

Peter Wild

